

Serial No. 10/600,198
Art Unit 3721

Amendment B

Remarks:

Responsive to the Official Action mailed December 28, 2004, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration, reexamination and allowance of claims 1-7 and 9-18 in view of the following remarks.

Applicant notes the Examiner's withdrawal of the previously indicated allowability of claims 8, 11 and 13 and has issued rejections based principally upon newly evaluated (previously cited, see, PTO-892 in Action mailed May 5, 2004), U.S. Patent No. 4,559,767 to Takami. The Examiner has characterized Takami as disclosing a feed system for a strapping machine comprising a strap chute (5) and a strap supply (21) with a strapping head (3, 4) located between the strap chute (5) and the strap supply (21). The Examiner states further that the Takami patent discloses a pair of tensioning wheels (28, 29) disposed along the strap path proximal the strap supply (21), wherein the tensioning wheels (28, 29) are moveable into and out of engagement with one another (column 4 lines 5-10; column 5 lines 58-61) and a pair of feed wheel (30, 31) disposed along the strap path proximal the strapping head (3, 4), the feed wheels (30, 31) defining a nip therebetween in which one feed wheel is a driven feed wheel (31) and the other is an idle feed wheel (30; figure 2). Further, the Examiner provides that a drive (M₂) is connected to the feed wheels (30, 31) and tensioning wheels (28, 29; figure 2), wherein the drive is a reversible motor, wherein a strap material (8) is conveyed around the strap chute (5) by forward rotation of the feed wheels (30, 31; column 4 lines 24-32), and retracted around a load by reverse rotation of the feed wheels (30, 31; column 4 lines 48-51; column 6, lines 14-23). Takami discloses the use of sensors for monitoring the tension in the strap (8), but does not disclose the use of a sensor for monitoring the presence or lack of movement of the strap. (Emphasis added)

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection in that Applicant submits that the Examiner has not properly characterized the Takami patent and a such has not properly applied this reference against the claimed invention.

Specifically, the Examiner has characterized Takami as showing a pair of tensioning wheels 28, 29 disposed . . . proximal the strap supply and a pair of feed wheels 30, 31 disposed .

Serial No. 10/600,198
Art Unit 3721

Amendment B

... proximal the strapping head. Respectfully, Applicant submits that the Examiner's characterization is incorrect. Directing the Examiner's attention to Col. 5, lines 24-30, the Takami patent provides that:

As shown in FIG. 2, the rollers 25 and 26 for forwarding and preliminarily tensioning the strap, the rollers 28 and 29 for the exclusive use in forwarding the strap, the rollers 30 and 31 for fully tensioning the strap, and the guide roller 63 are connected with each other by endless chains, endless belts, sprocket wheels, pulleys and gears so as to be driven by a motor M₂.

Thus, the rollers (or wheels) 28 and 29 are feed rollers and the rollers (or wheels) 30 and 31 are tensioning rollers. That is, the feed wheels are 28 and 29 which are proximal the supply and the tension wheels are 30 and 31 which are proximal the strapping head. This is in complete contrast to the presently claimed invention in which the tensioning wheels are disposed along the strap path proximal the strap supply, and the feed wheels are disposed along the strap path proximal the strapping head.

The specification clearly points out the advantages of the present arrangement over known configurations. In known strappers (such as that disclosed in Takami), in the event a strap error occurs, as by a failure of the gripper to grip the leading end of the strap, during the tensioning cycle, the strap will be over-retracted or over-pulled by the tensioning wheels. When this occurs, the strap is pulled rearwardly to the extent that it has essentially pulled out of the strap path. Pulling the strap from the path results in a machine fault. Operator attention is then required to stop machine operation and refeed strap into the feed system to resume operation.

Advantageously, the present configuration (having the tensioning wheels located proximal the strap supply and the feed wheels disposed proximal the strapping head), permits a strap feeding and tensioning system with automatic reefed, in which, following a strap error or fault, strap retraction ceases and reefed occurs by the tensioning wheels rotating to convey the strap material into the nip between the feed wheels. Thus, reefed occurs without additional parts or assemblies beyond those employed for feeding and tensioning the strap material during normal machine operations.

Serial No. 10/600,198
Art Unit 3721

Amendment B

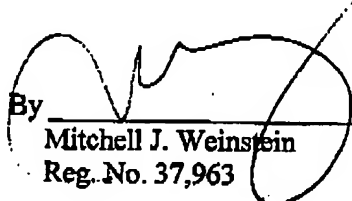
Accordingly, because the Takami patent discloses a completely different arrangement than the claimed invention (and than that characterized by the Examiner), Applicant submits that all of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) based upon the Takami patent should be withdrawn because of the misreading of that patent.

In conclusion, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-7 and 9-18 are in condition for allowance and respectfully and earnestly solicits early indication of same.

Applicant submits that no fee is due in connection with the present AMENDMENT B. If, however, there is a fee due, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 23-0920. Should any petitions be necessary, it is respectfully requested that the present paper constitute any such necessary petition.

Should the Examiner believe that a telephone interview would expedite prosecution and allowance of the present application, or address any outstanding formal issues, he is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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